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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KIWANUKA (Uganda)

later: Ms. Polič (Vice Chairman) (Croatia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (TERRITORIES NOT COVERED UNDER OTHER AGENDA ITEMS) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Jarry (Mayor of Le Mans (France)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

2. Mr. JARRY (Mayor of Le Mans (France)) said that the question of Western Sahara was one of the last remaining problems of decolonization. As such, it raised concern among the elected officials of the French city of Le Mans, which had been twinned in 1982 with a Western Saharan village called Haouza located not far from the refugee camp at Tindouf. By virtue of its historical ties with the countries of the Maghreb, France had taken part in the conclusion of the Madrid Accords, but a satisfactory solution had still not been found. In his view, it was a decolonization problem that must be solved through the holding of a referendum.

3. After his election to the office of Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1997, Mr. Kofi Annan and James Baker III, his Personal Envoy, had persuaded the parties to engage in direct negotiations, which had culminated in the signature of the Houston agreements. As a result, lists of Western Saharans who had the right to vote had been published in January 2000, a major step forward towards a lasting peace in the region. The settlement plan could not be implemented, however, owing to a divergence of views between the parties, and the referendum scheduled for July 2000 had had to be postponed.

4. In order to break the stalemate over the settlement plan and to prevent the resurgence of armed conflict, the parties must be brought to agree on the right to self-determination, which must be instituted in the most reliable fashion, namely through the holding of a free and fair referendum. Now that most of the work of identifying individuals who had the right to vote in the referendum had been done, it was essential to resolve the remaining divergences and to hold under United Nations auspices a referendum that would enable the people of Western Sahara freely to decide its own future.

5. Mr. Jarry withdrew.

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Briones Vives (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara (IAJUWS)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

7. Mr. BRIONES VIVES (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara (IAJUWS)) said that all the actions envisaged in the settlement plan, except for the ceasefire, were nine years behind schedule. The United Nations had expended a great deal of financial resources and effort on the activities relating to the Western Sahara, but more than that: it had taken nearly a quarter of a century for the Identification Commission of the United Nations Mission for the

Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to confirm the census elaborated by Spain. With reference to the referendum, he drew the attention of members of the Fourth Committee to a number of recent events. After many years of work, a list of voters numbering 86,386 had been made public, but 134,000 appeals for inclusion in the list had been received. The vast majority of those appeals had been submitted by the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior, in violation of the settlement plan. In his latest reports, the Secretary-General of the United Nations indicated that all of the appeals would be considered separately, that the size of the MINURSO identification team would not be increased and that in the meantime, no progress would be made with the other phases of the peace plan. Consequently, there would be a two-year delay in implementing the calendar of work. In the past year, meetings between the two parties had been held in London and Geneva, presided over by James Baker III, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and in the presence of representatives of Algeria and Mauritania, with a view to breaking the deadlock in the implementation of the Houston agreements.

8. As a result of the events just outlined, IAJUWS considered that the United Nations should take steps without further delay to secure the immediate release of all Saharan prisoners of conscience languishing in Moroccan prisons; defend the human rights of the Saharan population in the zones occupied by Morocco; achieve the immediate and effective opening of the land, sea and air routes in and around Western Sahara and establish control over them by MINURSO; provide for an international presence during the elaboration of the list of voters, the preparations for the referendum, the formation of the electorate, the holding of the referendum itself and the recount of votes; curtail the exploitation by the Kingdom of Morocco of the natural wealth of Western Sahara; and cancel all existing economic agreements for such exploitation between third countries and the Kingdom of Morocco.

9. Recently, through the intermediary of the United Nations, the self-determination process of the people of East Timor had been brought to fruition. It was to be hoped that the international community would project the same level of commitment to decolonization in the case of Western Sahara.

10. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said the petitioner's statement contained unsubstantiated allegations against Morocco. The petitioner had referred to the violation of human rights on Moroccan territory. He wondered whether the petitioner was aware of the numerous instances of human rights violations committed in the Saharan refugee camps in Tindouf, including violations of the right to freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Could the Saharan refugees in those camps travel freely abroad? As far as he knew, they could not. He knew, however, that people not wishing to remain in the Tindouf camps had to escape from them, at the risk of their lives. It was also well known that in Morocco, specifically in the southern part, significant progress had been made in implementing human rights.

11. Mr. BRIONES VIVES (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) said that the Moroccan representative had formulated a criticism in the guise of a question. His statement as a petitioner was based on objective information known to the entire international community. He knew nothing, moreover, of

systematic violations of human rights in the Tindouf camps, whereas human rights were constantly being flouted in the territories occupied by Morocco.

12. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) observed that the petitioner had not answered his question about freedom of movement and freedom of expression in the Saharan refugee camps in Tindouf. The issue was whether there were human rights violations of any kind, not whether they were systematic ones.

13. Mr. BRIONES VIVES (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) said that the Saharan refugees residing in the camps enjoyed full freedom of movement and of expression and that those freedoms were extended even to those who no longer wished to remain in the position they had occupied as refugees for many years.

14. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the Committee would be hearing petitioners who could testify that they were unable to bring members of their families out of the refugee camps in order to join them in southern Morocco, to which they had returned. He also pointed out that the petitioner had not actually answered his question about freedom of expression.

15. Mr. BRIONES VIVES (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) said that freedom of speech and freedom of association were ensured in the Saharan refugee camps, and that only a small group of people had fled the camps. The representative of Morocco had apparently forgotten about the repression to which tens of thousands of Saharans had been subjected for over 20 years at the hands of the Moroccan authorities.

16. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), speaking on a point of order, asked the Chairman to call on the petitioner to refrain from attacks on a sovereign State. The petitioner must not use the right to reply to the questions asked of him as a pretext for hurling accusations at Morocco.

17. Mr. BRIONES VIVES (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) said the Moroccan representative's insistence on stopping him from speaking was a flagrant example of the methods to which the Moroccan regime had resorted for over 25 years in curtailing the freedom of the local population.

18. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), speaking on a point of order, requested the Chairman to deprive the petitioner of the right to speak unless he could answer the question asked of him.

19. The CHAIRMAN asked the petitioner to answer the question and to refrain from attacking the Kingdom of Morocco.

20. Mr. BRIONES VIVES (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) said that his aim was not to criticize a given Government but to defend the rules of international law. As for the question asked by the representative of Morocco, he maintained that in the territory controlled by Saharans, basic human rights were observed.

21. Mr. Briones Vives withdrew.

22. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rodríquez (Human Rights League of Spain) took a place at the petitioners' table.

23. Mr. RODRÍGUEZ (Human Rights League of Spain) said it was intolerable that in one of the most inhospitable regions of the planet, 200,000 Saharans lived as refugees in the camps of Tindouf, surviving solely on international humanitarian aid. The remaining residents of Western Sahara were hardly in a better position, as they were subjected to repression by Moroccan security forces and to extrajudicial or summary execution, forced abduction, torture, unjust trial and arbitrary detention. It was worth mentioning that those human rights violations were carried out by a repressive apparatus. There were figures showing the seriousness of the repression committed. It was calculated that more than 500 Saharans had disappeared from Western Sahara. Various secret detention centres that held many Saharans along with other detained opponents of the Moroccan regime had been discovered. Representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had had their requests to carry out investigations denied. Accusations of torture were rejected by Moroccan courts, and in the rare cases when they were admitted, they were immediately dismissed, even when eloquent proof of torture was shown.

24. The causes common to all those human rights violations were impunity and the passivity of the international community. Even though there were sufficient international mechanisms to put a brake on human rights violations, those rights would only be completely protected when the Saharan people was granted the right to self-determination through a referendum. In order to revive the implementation of the peace plan developed by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was currently blocked by the large number of appeals presented by Morocco for inclusion of names in the list of voters, the operational directives for the implementation of the appeals process (S/1999/483/Add.1), especially paragraphs 20 and 21 (d) and (i), must be strictly observed. He called on the United Nations to review the matter in view of its immense importance for the holding of the referendum on the self-determination of the Saharan people.

25. It was news to no one that the peace process was being delayed at every turn by Morocco, which persisted in refusing to collaborate with MINURSO. What was worrying, however, was the ineffective, inoperative approach taken by the international community to upholding international legality and the human rights of the Saharan people. Especially shameful had been the attitude of various Spanish Governments which, instead of applying real and effective diplomatic pressure on Morocco, had adopted neutrality, signing fishing agreements on Saharan waters with that country and selling weapons to it.

26. Following the latest postponement of the referendum on self-determination, alternative scenarios such as the "third way" had been developed outside the framework of the peace plan. The "third way" proposal, sponsored by France, would entail the conversion of Western Sahara into a Moroccan province with a "certain degree of autonomy". The argument behind the proposal was that it would prevent the outbreak of a new war in Western Sahara. But the authors of the proposal were glossing over the recent signs of a new escalation caused by Morocco's obstructionist manoeuvres and the international community's consent to them. The Human Rights League of Spain considered that the only legitimate

resolution to the Saharan conflict must be the holding of the referendum on self-determination, and not the "third way", which denied the Saharan people the rights enshrined in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples of 14 December 1960 and in the Charter of the OAU. In conclusion, he called on the international community, and especially the United Nations, to apply the necessary diplomatic pressure so that the human rights violations in the occupied territories of Western Sahara were acknowledged and the corresponding damage repaired so that the referendum on self-determination could be held as soon as possible.

27. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that many facts were distorted in the petitioner's statement and false statistics had been given on the number of refugees. He asked the petitioner to state his source for the figure of 200,000, since United Nations statistics set the number of refugees at 20,000. He disagreed with the petitioner's assessment of the human rights situation in Morocco and asked him to state whether the right to freedom of movement was observed in the Saharan refugee camps in Tindouf, and in particular, whether the refugees had the right to move freely between the camps and to return to Morocco. Had the travel authorizations obligatory for refugees wishing to leave the camp been abolished, and was it not true that the NGO he represented was working to do away with the imposition of such authorization on refugees by camp security forces?

28. Mr. RODRÍGUEZ (Human Rights League of Spain) assured members of the Committee that, contrary to the assertions of the Moroccan representative, he had not now and never had had any intention of deceiving them. He had been speaking of the 200,000 persons living in the refugee camps, not those included in the list of voters. Many of them travelled every year to Europe and elsewhere for treatment, studies or other purposes. On the other hand, he was not aware that such travel was permitted for Saharans living in the occupied territories, many of whom wished to go to other countries for treatment, studies or other reasons. While anyone who so desired could visit the Tindouf camp, he knew of no one who had been permitted to enter and leave the camps in the territories occupied by Morocco. He called on Morocco to allow anyone who so desired to visit the occupied territories in order to verify the situation on the spot.

29. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), speaking on a point of order, pointed out that the Committee worked on the basis of certain rules under which petitioners had to answer the questions put to them and not address unrelated issues or use the right to answer as a chance to attack Morocco. If the petitioner could not answer the question asked, he should admit it. He called on the Chairman to ask the petitioner to observe the rules established by the Committee.

30. Mr. Rodríguez (Human Rights League of Spain) withdrew.

31. Ms. Polič (Croatia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

32. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Brahim (Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saquía el-Hamra y del Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

33. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that no request for hearing of the petitioner had been circulated: consequently, he could not speak on behalf of the Frente POLISARIO.

34. Mr. BELAOURA (Algeria) said that the Frente POLISARIO was one of the parties to the conflict and that any of its representatives could speak before the Committee on its behalf.

35. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee's established practice was to allow individuals to speak on behalf of organizations.

36. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that petitioners invited to speak before the Committee must stick to the facts and not launch into declarations on behalf of any given organization. They could not be replaced by persons not mentioned in the request for hearing.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that she would be prepared to discuss those remarks with their authors later. In the meantime, she requested the petitioner to withdraw.

38. Mr. Brahim withdrew.

39. Mr. BELAOURA (Algeria) expressed surprise at the fact that an invitation to speak had first been extended to the representative of the Frente POLISARIO, and then withdrawn. He requested clarification from the secretariat as to why the Frente POLISARIO, one of the parties to the conflict, could not be represented in the Committee by a person of its own choosing.

40. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that when the question of decolonization was being discussed, the Committee must hear petitioners in their personal capacity, not listen to the representative of the Frente POLISARIO as one of the parties to the conflict.

41. Mr. LEWIS (Antigua and Barbuda), Vice-Chairman, said that there was a precedent for one representative speaking on behalf of another and it would be unfair to deprive the representative of the Frente POLISARIO of the right to speak.

42. Mr. LISWANISO (Namibia) supported the remarks made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda and thought the representative of the Frente POLISARIO must be allowed to speak.

43. Mr. KUMALO (South Africa) said he agreed with the representatives of Algeria, Namibia and Antigua and Barbuda that it would be unfair not to permit the representative of the Frente POLISARIO to speak.

44. Mr. DONIGI (Papua New Guinea) said that representatives of the Frente POLISARIO always spoke before the Special Committee. That in no way limited Morocco's right to express its point of view or opinion. If members of the Committee were to vote on the question, they would need to be fully informed about it. The Committee had already granted a request for hearing made on behalf of the Frente POLISARIO. The surname of the representative of the Frente POLISARIO had been entered on the request, but in granting it, the Fourth

Committee had also granted a request from the Frente POLISARIO itself. He requested the Chairman to find out whether Morocco was objecting to a statement by a specific individual or to a statement by the Frente POLISARIO.

45. The CHAIRMAN asked the representative of Morocco to explain his objections.

46. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that in principle a petitioner was an individual who spoke before the Committee, not for an organization, movement or party, but in his or her personal capacity. His delegation had never maintained that the representative of the Frente POLISARIO could not speak in his capacity as a petitioner, but it could not accept the replacement by another person of the individual who had put forward the request for hearing. It was a question of principle, and he endorsed the Chairman's decision to clarify the situation.

47. Mr. CAMARA (Guinea) said that if a representative of the Frente POLISARIO wished to speak before the Committee, he or she must submit the appropriate request. Statements made on behalf or in place of another person were unacceptable, and he supported the decision taken by the Chairman.

48. Mr. TALL (Senegal) said his delegation endorsed the Chairman's decision on the hearing of the petitioner.

49. Mr. OSEI (Ghana) said that his delegation supported the position of the representative of South Africa and thought that the representative of the Frente POLISARIO should be permitted to speak.

50. Mr. MANGACHI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the matter was not a procedural one but one of substance. His delegation would like confirmation from the Chairman that whatever the procedure that was adopted, the necessary steps would be taken to enable the representative of the Frente POLISARIO to speak.

51. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said he wished to make it clear that the question was purely a procedural one and had nothing to do with the substantive issue.

52. Mr. DAUSA CESPEDES (Cuba) said that one of the major questions before the Committee was that of granting a hearing to representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation believed that the same opportunity must be given to the representative of the Frente POLISARIO.

53. Mr. MOTSI (Zimbabwe) said he supported the remarks made by the representative of South Africa and thought that the petitioner representing the Frente POLISARIO must be permitted to speak.

54. Mr. AUGUSTO (Angola) said he fully supported the comments of all those who thought that the petitioner representing the Frente POLISARIO should be allowed to speak.

55. Ms. THOMAS (Jamaica) said she endorsed the statements made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda and other delegations concerning the right to speak of the representative of the Frente POLISARIO. She proposed that the

meeting be postponed for 10 minutes to enable the Bureau to discuss the matter and adopt a procedurally correct decision.

56. The CHAIRMAN said that she did not by any means intend to deny the representative of the Frente POLISARIO the opportunity to speak. In view of the doubts expressed about whether the person who was to take the floor on behalf of the Frente POLISARIO was the person named in the request for hearing, however, and in order to give the Bureau time to clarify the issue, she had asked Mr. Brahim to withdraw. She pointed out that in his letter to the Chairman of the Committee dated 24 September 2000, Mr. Boukhari had indicated that Mr. Brahim was to speak on his behalf. She accordingly proposed that either the discussion be pursued according to the list of speakers after a five-minute suspension, or that the next petitioner be given the floor, after which the Committee would hear Mr. Brahim.

57. Mr. BELAOURA (Algeria) recalled firstly that it had been stated from the outset that Mr. Brahim, not Mr. Boukhari, was to speak on behalf of the Frente POLISARIO, as indicated in the letter from that organization, and that that had raised no objections from the procedural point of view, since the practice already existed. Second, representatives of a number of countries had strongly supported the request for hearing, since the Committee was a unique forum, in that representatives of national liberation movements could express their opinions there. Considerations of a procedural character must not be allowed to hinder the discussion of such an important question as the process of decolonization.

58. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that he did not have the information to which the Chairman had referred. In the letter from the Frente POLISARIO dated 13 September 2000, only Mr. Boukhari was mentioned. He, too, proposed that the meeting be suspended in order to clarify the facts.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

59. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Brahim (Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.

60. Mr. BRAHIM (Frente POLISARIO) said that in 1990-1991, the United Nations had launched an initiative aimed at the peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of a referendum on self-determination that would enable the Saharan people freely to decide its own future. Both parties to the conflict - the Frente POLISARIO and the Kingdom of Morocco - had adopted the settlement plan developed jointly by OAU and the United Nations in which, inter alia, the holding of a referendum in February 1992 had been envisaged. Morocco, however, had impeded the implementation of the settlement plan by the established date. What it wanted, in reality, was the holding of a referendum skewed in favour of its annexation of Western Sahara. In the six-year span of its operations, MINURSO had completed the identification of all individuals, including Moroccan settlers, who had requested inclusion in the list of voters. About 200,000 names had been processed in the identification operation. In January 2000, a preliminary list of voters comprising 86,349 names had been published. The United Nations had thus removed the main impediment to the implementation of the settlement plan. The referendum could go forward on the date set by the

Secretary-General, namely July 2000. If everything had been done according to the established plan, then by now, the United Nations would have settled a major conflict through peaceful means and in accordance with international law, thereby giving strong support for peace and stability in the region.

61. Morocco had not agreed with the conclusions reached by MINURSO's Identification Commission. It had submitted 135,000 appeals and demanded that the United Nations postpone the whole operation. In breach of the agreed appeals process, it was demanding that the 135,000 appeals be automatically accepted by MINURSO, although in 98 per cent of the cases there was no legal or factual basis for doing so. Morocco was aware that most of the Saharans who would participate in the referendum would vote for independence. That was why it had decided to set up obstacles to the process in the hopes that an influential European country would do everything possible in the Security Council to ensure that the referendum on self-determination was scrapped and a pseudo-solution in line with Morocco's expansionist ambitions adopted. Such a pseudo-solution would not only undermine the credibility of the United Nations and invalidate the efforts of decades past but would also lead to an outbreak of hostilities. Morocco's defiance of the rules of international law was evident in its conduct in the occupied territories, where despite the presence of the United Nations, large-scale repression was practised against the Saharan population.

62. The changes following the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 54/87 of 6 December 1999, in which it had reiterated its support for an impartial and free referendum, were indicative of the significant progress made in the peace process, even though serious problems remained, including threats to the very core of the right to self-determination of the Saharan people. The United Nations must convince Morocco to cooperate in a spirit of good will in the holding of the referendum on self-determination, which was the only viable and just basis for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Western Sahara and had been acknowledged by both parties and supported by the international community. The United Nations possessed sufficient grounds for intensifying its efforts to ensure that the referendum was carried out. The advances made by MINURSO, such as completion of the voter identification process, imposition of the ceasefire and preparations for repatriation of voters to the Territory, gave grounds for moving ahead. The United Nations must not succumb to intimidation by Morocco, which was striving to push back the date for the referendum, nor to the influence exerted by certain Powers whose goal was the breakdown of the settlement plan and the invalidation of the legal framework for resolution of the conflict which had been adopted by the United Nations over 30 years ago.

63. Mr. Brahim withdrew.

64. Mr. CASENAVE (Groupe d'Etudes parlementaire sur les droits de l'homme, French National Assembly) said he was speaking before the Committee not on political issues or on the peace plan, but solely on questions of human rights. The Comité para la Reagrupación de Familias Saharauis had informed him about the situation in the refugee camps in Tindouf. Reports by Saharans had prompted him to journey to Laayoune to hear from the witnesses themselves, men and women who had left the Tindouf camps, their accounts of the human rights situation and to report the results of his discussions to the United Nations, which could not

remain indifferent to their situation. In Laayoune he had met with former members of the Frente POLISARIO who had told him of the repression to which they had been subjected once they had announced their desire to leave the organization, imprisonment without a trial or the right to legal counsel, torture and insults, the forced marriage of women who had been left without husbands and the separation of children from their parents.

65. The organization he had already mentioned had likewise furnished a list of Saharans who had succumbed to torture as well as written testimony from those who had survived and who asked that the fate of persons who had disappeared should be investigated. One noteworthy story among all the others received was that humanitarian aid was stolen by highly placed officials of the Frente POLISARIO as soon as it reached Oran. Everyone in the Tindouf camps was being used in effect as a hostage for the diversion of humanitarian aid. Those facts made it incumbent upon the United Nations and the international community to investigate the observance of human rights in the camps and to look into the use made of humanitarian aid, as well as to provide the necessary resources for such purposes.

66. Mr. BELAOURA (Algeria) said that he would like to ask two questions of the petitioner. First, had he ever been in the refugee camps in Algeria or Mauritania, and how many times had he visited Morocco? Second, was his group concerned solely with the human rights of Saharans in the refugee camps, or did it also deal with the situation of the tens of thousands of Saharans living under occupation, for the return of whose freedom the United Nations was making major efforts?

67. Mr. CASENAVE (Groupe d'Etudes parlementaire sur les droits de l'homme, French National Assembly) said that he consistently spoke out about reports of serious human rights violations, not only in Western Sahara, but throughout the world, but he did so only where complete freedom and independence could be guaranteed both for him and for his interlocutors. In late April 2000, he had gone to Morocco at the invitation of the Comité para la Reagrupación de Familias Saharauis, and there he had met with Saharans who had told him about living conditions in the camps. He was prepared to go to the Tindouf camps if the necessary access to the persons he wished to see and conditions for real discussions with them were ensured.

68. Mr. BELAOURA (Algeria) pointed out that the petitioner had apparently forgotten to answer his second question.

69. Mr. CASENAVE (Groupe d'Etudes parlementaire sur les droits de l'homme, French National Assembly) said that he was prepared to travel to Tindouf if the necessary conditions for his trip were met. He had been asked how many times he had visited Morocco: he had been to Morocco only once, to visit Western Sahara. He had been asked whether the group that he represented was concerned solely with human rights in Western Sahara. He had already answered in the negative, explaining that the group was concerned with human rights throughout the world. It was therefore unclear to him what the second question comprised.

70. Mr. BELAOURA (Algeria) said that he did not intend to get into a debate with the petitioner, who was refusing to answer his second question. What the

Committee had heard was a biased account of the human rights situation, and for that reason he would not press for an answer to his question.

71. Mr. Casenave withdrew.

72. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ahmed Baba (sheikh, Oulad Dlim tribe) took a place at the petitioners' table.

73. Mr. AHMED BABA (sheikh, Oulad Dlim tribe) said that he wanted justice and help for his people.

74. Mr. MEZDOUA (Algeria) speaking on a point of order, said that according to established procedure, a copy of a statement given in one's native language must be furnished to the United Nations interpreters, and the interpretation must be provided from the interpretation booth, not by the speaker's interpreter in the meeting room itself. He asked that the established practice of the United Nations be observed.

75. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) observed that because tribal sheikhs spoke only in the Western Saharan dialect (Hassaniya), they had their own interpreters into one of the official languages of the United Nations. Precedents existed: for example, in 1975, a tribal sheikh had had his own interpreter from the Western Saharan dialect, which differed slightly from Arabic. It was unclear why the representative of Algeria was raising the issue now but had not done so earlier. Furthermore, it was unfair to a tribal sheikh who had worked on the Identification Commission on behalf of the Frente POLISARIO and who could reveal the truth about its work.

76. Mr. MEZDOUA (Algeria) said he did not wish to engage in polemics with his colleague from Morocco, who had mentioned MINURSO, something that was not within the Committee's purview. The Fourth Committee was responsible for considering the question of decolonization. The petitioner must provide the text of his statement to the interpretation booth in accordance with established practice. He had no objection to the Committee's decision to give all petitioners a hearing at their request; it was necessary to be consistent from start to finish. He could not understand why the representative of Morocco was insisting on the application of a precedent and why he had not made his request half an hour ago. It showed that the representative of Morocco had a double standard, and that was why his delegation was drawing attention to the matter.

77. Mr. AHMED BABA (sheikh, Oulad Dlim tribe) said that he wanted justice and help for his people, which had been deprived of its wealth and honour and had suffered greatly. The United Nations had identified tribes and tribal subgroups that had been unknown to the Frente POLISARIO. The Frente POLISARIO had announced that it would represent the population. His fellow tribesmen had been requested to take an oath on the Koran in front of MINURSO representatives. They had then been sent to work with the observers who had had lists of certain people, some of whom they knew and a majority of whom they did not know. The Saharan people was experiencing severe deprivation, and international humanitarian aid was being sold by Frente POLISARIO in other countries, leaving

only crumbs for the people. He requested that observers be sent to see what was happening in the camps.

78. Mr. Ahmed Baba withdrew.

79. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Omar Bahia (sheikh, Laâroussyenne tribe) took a place at the petitioners' table.

80. Mr. OMAR BAHIA (sheikh, Laâroussyenne tribe) said that he had been abducted by the Frente POLISARIO and imprisoned for 15 years. He had been forced to take an oath on the Koran in front of MINURSO representatives but had been ordered to exclude the majority of candidates from other tribes. His conscience, however, had prohibited him from lying. The Frente POLISARIO was seeking to submerge the referendum in appeals for the next 25 or 30 years. He asked the Committee to look into information about persons who had been shot or subjected to torture by the Frente POLISARIO. Many had been thrown into the prisons of Algeria. There were about 35,000 people in the camps, not 200,000, as had been claimed: even though such figures had been provided to the United Nations, they were totally groundless. The aid furnished for 200,000 individuals was being diverted by Algeria and the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO.

81. Mr. Omar Bahia withdrew.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.